



ParentInfo

News for a child's most important educator

Jan. 21, 2014

Produced by the Kentucky Department of Education

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2** Contests honor 'People's House'
- 2** Important reminders
- 3** Kentucky holds steady in national education report
- 3** '15 to Finish' off to a great start
- 4** General Assembly will focus on school funding
- 4** Read more about the latest with Kentucky students



New to ParentInfo?

[Click here](#) to sign up to receive this newsletter twice a month. For more information, contact Susan Riddell at susan.riddell@education.ky.gov or at (502) 564-2000.



Federal grant targets improved school health

Kentucky students and staff will benefit from a new federal grant to fund health and wellness initiatives aimed at reducing risk factors associated with childhood and adult obesity, diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Recently Gov. Steve Beshear announced that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention awarded the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) a \$1.7 million grant that, in part, focuses on healthy environments and prevention activities in schools to improve management of chronic diseases. Kentucky was one of only 32 states to receive additional funding to achieve even greater reach and impact.

The grant cultivates a partnership between the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and DPH to focus on school health issues such as nutrition standards and policies; physical education and physical activity policies; and school staff wellness policies.

"KDE is committed to work with our partners to continuously improve the health and wellness of Kentucky's students and school staff," Education Commissioner Terry Holliday said. "Healthy students miss fewer days of school and are better able to learn and succeed," he

See HEALTH, Page 2



Contests honor 'People's House'

Kentucky students are invited to submit original artwork and/or essays in the Governor's Mansion Centennial Visual Art and Essay Contest sponsored by First Lady Jane Beshear, the Kentucky Governor's Mansion Centennial Committee and the Kentucky Department of Education.

The contest is part of a yearlong series of events celebrating the 100th anniversary of the current Kentucky Governor's Mansion, also known as the "People's House."

The visual art contest is open to students in grades K-12. Students may use any medium to create a 2-D or 3-D artwork that reflects one of the visual art contest's themes. First, second and third place winners will be named in grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Students must submit digital images of their work for judging.

The essay contest is open to grades 4-12 students who must choose one of three writing prompts for the theme of their essay. First, second and third place winners will be selected at the following award levels: grades 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12.

First place winners in each age group will receive a \$100 prize, join Jane Beshear for lunch at the mansion and have their work publicly displayed there.

Complete contest information, rules, judging criteria and an official entry form are available [here](#) and [here](#). Only e-mailed entries will be accepted.

The deadline for submissions is 11:59 p.m. on March 14. Questions may be directed to [Mary Ann Miller](#) or [Rebecca Blessing](#).

HEALTH, from Page 1

said. "Healthy staff members also have fewer absences and are role models for students to develop habits that support a healthy lifestyle."

Throughout the five years of the grant, KDE and DPH will work together to promote healthy behaviors among school children and staff. Initiatives will include:

- developing a statewide School Health and Physical Education network, also known as SHAPE
- developing model nutrition and physical activity policies and pilot interventions in schools, early care and education worksites
- working with the state employee worksite wellness program to target school employees
- implementing nutrition and physical activity standards in schools
- improving the tracking of students with chronic conditions and working with schools to establish protocols to manage care needs and connect students to private or public insurance and medical homes

Being overweight is one of the major risk factors for chronic disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control, one-third of Kentucky high school students are either overweight or obese. The rate is only slightly lower in preschool children who are 2-5 years old.

"The health of young people is a priority of public health staff across the state," DPH Commissioner Stephanie Mayfield said. "With this grant and particularly this partnership with Kentucky schools, we are promoting healthy outcomes for our students. By focusing on healthy habits now, we can prevent chronic diseases in these children's adult years," she said.

Important reminders

- Have your high school senior fill out and turn in his or her [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) as soon as possible. The easiest way to submit the FAFSA online is by going to www.fafsa.gov.
- The deadline to apply for [Governor's School for Entrepreneurs](#) (GSE) is Jan. 31. This year's summer program will run from June 22 through July 12. To read more about GSE, [click here](#).
- January is school board recognition month. See what [Kentucky school boards](#) are doing, and find a way to say "thank you."
- Look for more student contests [here](#).

Kentucky holds steady in national education report

Education Commissioner Terry Holliday praised Kentucky teachers, administrators, parents, students, business and community members recently following the release of an annual assessment of all states on key education indicators.

Each year, *Education Week* (a national publication that focuses on P-12 education) produces a special issue, "Quality Counts." The report tracks key education indicators and grades states on their policy efforts and outcomes.

Last year, Kentucky ranked 10th in the nation. This year, due to changes such as the Common Core State Standards and Elementary and Secondary Education Act waivers and the impact they might have on the report's indicators and grading framework, the report did not provide overall rankings but did assign specific grades and state rankings in six categories. The state showed modest improvement.

"Kentucky's efforts to educate our young people create a stronger workforce and improve the quality of life for all the people of the Commonwealth are paying off," Holliday said. "This 'Quality Counts' report validates all the hard work that has taken place over the past 2.5 decades to reform our public school system and provide Kentucky students with a world class educational experience from cradle to career."

"Quality Counts" provides data and information about states' efforts in:

- chance for success (an index that combines information from 13 indicators that cover state residents' lives from cradle to career)
- K-12 achievement
- school finance
- transitions and alignment
- standards, assessments and accountability
- teaching profession

The state's lowest score was in spending (school finance) with 55.5 points, which is an F. Kentucky's per-pupil expenditure (PPE) is \$1,418 less than the national average. According to the report, only 7.1 percent of students in the state go to school in a district with the PPE at or above the national average. Nationally, the number is 46 percent.

"The educational progress we've made to date is something we can be proud of and is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our educators," Holliday said. "But we are at a crossroads. We've stretched our dollars as far as we can. Without improved funding for education, that progress will quickly erode."

This is the 18th edition of the annual "Quality Counts" report, and the theme this year is school district governance. A series of articles examines the increasingly complex fiscal, political and technological pressures districts face and how challenges such as school choice, merger and federal policy shifts are transforming the traditional environment for education governance.

The full report is available at www.edweek.org/.



Terry Holliday

'15 to Finish' is off to a great start

"15 to Finish" is a campaign to encourage Kentucky college students to graduate on time by completing at least 15 credits a semester.

Why is it important?

- It saves money, since taking 15 credits is the same cost as taking 12 credits at most of Kentucky's state universities. That's three free credits.
- It avoids the cost of extra semesters.
- It maximizes Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) money. KEES money only lasts eight semesters or within five years of high school graduation.
- It helps to get students out into the workforce sooner.
- It increases the likelihood for good grades and college completion.

Check out the ["15 to Finish" parents page](#) for eight suggestions on ways to help your high school student prepare to finish on time or to help your college student stay on track to graduate.

General Assembly will focus on school funding

By Tracy Goff-Herman

Most of us kick off the New Year with a list of resolutions. Many of us resolve to save money, eat right and exercise more – perennial favorites on resolution lists. The Kentucky General Assembly also has a list of returning issues that will once again feature prominently in the upcoming 2014 Regular Session. The state budget, pension shortfalls, gambling and charter schools all are back on the table.

For the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) and the Department of Education (KDE), the focus in the upcoming long session is on the budget. The Consensus Forecast Group, the official body charged with producing revenue projections for the upcoming biennium, hasn't met to finalize budget numbers yet. But the discussions around the budget do not look hopeful, with the state Budget Director Jane Driskell even suggesting the General Assembly may need to make cuts to balance the budget and stay within revenues.

Even if there is additional money available, it is already designated to go to the state pension system, which is short. There also are plenty of other budget items that need additional funding – such as the health insurance and its ever increasing costs.

At its December 2013 meeting, KBE adopted a resolution in which it encouraged the General Assembly and Gov. Steve Beshear to consider the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Tax Reform and consider allowing voters to decide the expanded gaming issue as a way to enhance the state's revenue.



KDE's budget priorities include the following:

- SEEK base funding
- flexible focus grants
- technology
- College and Career Readiness
- Kentucky Occupational Skill Standards Assessments
- local area vocational education centers
- ACT/WorkKeys
- district turnaround support
- finance officer legislation

Tracy Goff-Herman is the Kentucky Department of Education's legislative liaison to the Kentucky General Assembly. To read her entire column regarding the General Assembly, [click here](#).

Want to read more about the latest with Kentucky students?

- Do you know what [coding](#) is? Chances are, your child does. Recently, millions of students had a chance to learn about coding through an Hour of Code, a vision that all students should have the opportunity to learn computer programming and that computer science should be part of the core curriculum in education, alongside other science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses.

- [Click here](#) to read an article by Kentucky School Boards Association staff writer Madelynn Coldiron about the growing trend of school-aged children who are being raised by their grandparents.

- Read the latest Kentucky [Literacy Link](#) newsletter, a great resource for parents who want insight into educational strategies and for educators who want to deepen their understanding of content and practices.

- [KATE](#) – named as an acronym for Kentucky's Automated Technology Educator – is a robot that Bullitt Lick Middle School (Bullitt County) recently borrowed from Murray State University. KATE can sing, dance, discuss movies and most importantly help students learn about robotics and programming.

- 2013 is in the history books, but you should still have a look at Redbook's [top kid books of 2013](#).